

Mendocino Council of Governments

Approved MINUTES
Monday, October 6, 2003
Ukiah City Council Chambers

The Mendocino Council of Governments (MCOG) meets as the Board of Directors of:
Mendocino Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) and
Mendocino County Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (SAFE)

1. Call to Order / Roll Call . The meeting was called to order at 1:34 p.m. with Directors Willis (PAC), Shoemaker, Dahlhoff, Gjerde, and Campbell present; Chair Campbell presiding. Directors Larson and Wharff excused. Director McEntire absent.

Also present: Phil Dow, Executive Director; Janet Orth, Deputy-Administration; Loretta Ellard, Deputy-Planning; and Lisa Davey Bates, Assistant Planner. Larry Wright, Deputy-Long Range Planning arrived later for Reports. Guests: Charles Fielder, Caltrans District 1.

2. Convene as SAFE

3. SAFE Report. Dow reported call box activity and results of the permit hearing with the Coastal Plan administrator. The call box sites were approved with some conditions. Other installations are moving forward more rapidly than those on the coast. Dow answered questions of the Board. Discussion of coastal permits ensued. Color and size of the signs and boxes issues raised in testimonial heard at the hearing. Dow reported that signs are designed relative to speed of traffic, although Caltrans has authorized optional signs that are smaller than the regulation design. He noted that only 16 boxes would be placed along the 85 miles of coastline in Mendocino County, and that he has taken care to site the call boxes where other environmental impacts are already present. No action was taken.

4. Recess as SAFE - Reconvene as RTPA

5. Recess as RTPA - Reconvene as Policy Advisory Committee.

6. Consent Calendar. Director Gjerde noted two corrections (*replace "White" with "Gjerde" under roll call votes*). He also suggested one amendment; Chair Campbell concurred with the amendment to her statement under #9d of the minutes: "*She also noted a traffic signal is needed in Fort Bragg at Route 1 and Simpson Lane, with all the numerous events there.*"

Upon motion by Dahlhoff, second by Gjerde, and carried unanimously (*5 Ayes; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining; 3 Absent*): IT IS ORDERED that consent items are approved:

6. Approval of August 4, 2003 Minutes – as amended

Public Expression. None.

7 - 8. Regular Calendar.

7. Technical Advisory Committee Recommendation of September 17, 2003: First Amendment to 2003/04 Planning Overall Work Program (OWP). Dow gave an introduction of this item,

describing the Planning, Programming & Monitoring (PPM) funds MCOG receives relative to Senate Bill 45. The funds are programmed as requested by the Regional Transportation Planning Agency (MCOG), with the funds released in a lump sum annually. This year, however, the California Transportation Commission (CTC) has not approved any PPM funds to be released, although CTC staff has elevated their priority. Therefore, \$288,000 of unavailable PPM local funds needed to be amended out of the Work Program, and the entire program revised as a result. Many important projects were on the table to be amended out, and Dow reported a high level of cooperation among members of the Technical Advisory Committee during their deliberations. MCOG staff found some reductions in staffing costs that could be made, as a result of one phased-in retirement and one maternity leave. The Pavement Management System was recommended to be kept in the program.

Loretta Ellard answered questions of the Board. Director Gjerde asked about Fort Bragg's Residential Streets Safety Plan project, which was proposed for deletion. There was strong support from MCOG staff to keep the project, however Fort Bragg staff was willing to delay for a year. MCOG staff expects to eventually receive the PPM funds, although not this fiscal year.

Upon motion by Shoemaker, second by Dahlhoff, and carried unanimously on roll call vote (5 Ayes – Willis/PAC, Shoemaker, Dahlhoff, Gjerde, and Campbell; 0 Noes; 0 Abstaining; 3 Absent - McEntire, Larson, Wharff): IT IS ORDERED that the First Amendment to 2003/04 Planning Overall Work Program is approved as recommended by the Technical Advisory Committee, and the Executive Director is authorized to sign appropriate certifications and/or revised OWP Agreement as needed and to forward to Caltrans as required.

8. Discussion of Impacts of State Budget Reductions on Caltrans Project Delivery in Mendocino County (Willis). Director Willis handed out a revision to the packet attachment. She described the Fund Estimate process of the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and the background of this funding program. Several years ago, there was an extremely high fund balance, which received some criticism, and as a result, Caltrans embarked on an ambitious spending program at the direction of the California Transportation Commission (CTC). A prudent fund balance is considered to be approximately \$400 million, although the fund has fallen below \$100 million recently. Because of the State's current budget crisis, the CTC might deprogram about 200 existing projects in the STIP statewide. Caltrans is subject to a 12% budget reduction including layoffs. Caltrans' workload reduction is mainly in the STIP capital program, less so in the State Highways Operation & Protection Program (SHOPP). The Willits Bypass has been given a high priority and is not necessarily directly impacted by the budget cuts, but has received a reaffirmation for this multi-year project. The Hopland Bypass may be delayed for a year.

Charles Fielder, Deputy District Director for Program Management, Caltrans District 1, answered questions of the Board. Safety and seismic projects are prioritized and the Ten Mile Bridge replacement falls under this category. If a project is not found on the [handout] list, that is a good sign it may not be cut, however budget cuts are not completed yet and other projects could be impacted. The CTC is not voting in any new projects unless for safety or emergency, such as the Confusion Hill realignment on Highway 101. Discussion followed concerning the Willits and Hopland Bypass projects. MCOG had recently approved \$2 million of reserved STIP funds to potentially match the Hopland Bypass as a gesture of commitment to Caltrans, which could be programmed for either project, depending upon which is moving forward and other criteria. However, to date there is no Fund Estimate for the 2004 STIP, so the \$2 million has yet to be programmed. Dow expects a fund estimate in December. It was noted that Hopland Bypass construction is at least ten years in the future.

9. Reports - Information

- a. Mendocino Transit Authority. General Manager Bruce Richard reported both “good news & bad news.” The good news was MTA’s two new services that will reduce the unmet transit needs on their list. By agreement with Lake Transit Authority, which received grant funds to buy a bus, service will begin between Lake and Mendocino Counties. By agreement with Sonoma County Transit and with some seed money from North Coast Opportunities, MTA is working on starting a new service between Gualala and the Sea Ranch apartments, pending approval at MTA’s October Board meeting. The bad news was that the California Court of Appeals rejected MTA’s appeal concerning power of eminent domain for the North Ukiah Transit Center project site.
- b. North Coast Railroad Authority. Dow noted that NCRA has a new Executive Director, Mitch Stogner, who has been advised of this standing agenda item, although no NCRA representative was present to report at this meeting.
- c. MCOG Administration & Planning Staff
 1. *Summary of Meetings*. Dow referred to his written staff report.
 2. *NADO’s 36th Annual Training Conference, September 13-16, 2003*. Dow attended this meeting of the National Association of Development Organizations. He noted that California is the only state with Regional Transportation Planning Agencies established statewide, such that MCOG does not deal directly with the federal government. Most other NADO member agencies do work with the federal government. Dow considered the membership valuable for keeping in touch with federal issues and legislation, while noting that NADO deals with many other issues than transportation, such as rural economic development and water. Dow recommended attendance when possible, perhaps not every year, and monitoring of this organization. Chair Campbell added comments based on her experience at NADO meetings.
 3. *2004 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Schedule*. Dow referred to his written report. He expects a draft fund estimate on or about October 30. He responded to questions from the Board.
 4. *Social Services Transportation Advisory Committee (SSTAC) Vacancies*. Orth gave a report of recruitment efforts to fill the vacant and expired seats, and handed out a publicity flyer and a membership chart for reference. Board members were asked to identify potential new members for appointments to be made at the November 3 meeting.
 5. *Intermodal Project at California Western Railroad (CWR) Station in Willits*. Dow reported that the project is moving forward after a series of pitfalls over the past five years or so. He offered a reminder that MCOG is still responsible for STIP funding and projects, and that local officials may need assistance from MCOG staff in keeping these projects on track. Discussion followed. Director Gjerde expressed concerns about supporting paving of a parking lot with these funds. Dow characterized this as an intermodal project to be used by MTA, Amtrak, Greyhound, and CWR. The funds would have been lost to Mendocino County if the project had failed. Director Shoemaker noted that when the Board approved the programming of these funds for CWR, he had supported it because of the intermodal aspect despite the railroad’s private status.

Further discussion ensued concerning MCOG's policy of making available ten percent of STIP funds for rail mode projects and the process followed to select projects. Dow noted there is a covenant on the land property deed that guarantees public use for 20 years, also that CWR's bankruptcy judge recently ruled to preserve the public access requirements of this project funding.

Director Gjerde brought up the City of Fort Bragg's signalization project that also sought funds recently, which would be part of their downtown revitalization plan. He reported difficulty in getting flexibility for the project funded with MCOG's local funds while, according to Gjerde, the CWR station funded with rail money ultimately will not have much if any rail component. Chair Campbell directed Dow to contact Mr. David Goble, Fort Bragg's City Engineer, to pursue possible ways MCOG could assist with their project funding. She encourage Board members to support one another's projects, so that all areas of the regional community can be lifted up.

Ellard reminded the Board of the origins of the rail funds and the difficulty in identifying eligible rail projects. After a lengthy process, North Coast Railroad Authority and CWR had agreed on a collaborative project application.

10. a. Recess as Policy Advisory Committee - Reconvene as RTPA - Ratify Action of Policy Advisory Committee. Upon motion by Shoemaker, second by Dahlhoff, and carried unanimously (*4 Ayes; 0 Noes; 3 Absent*): IT IS ORDERED that the actions taken by the Policy Advisory Committee are ratified by the MCOG Board of Directors.

Director Dahlhoff was excused from the meeting at 3:17 p.m.

9. Reports, continued

c. MCOG Administration & Planning Staff

6. *Miscellaneous.* Larry Wright reported on progress of the Wine Country Interregional Partnership (IRP) project. The Existing Conditions Report was completed. The Leadership Team met once, a few more seats remain to be filled to round out the representation, and the next meeting is planned for November. The Projections Report is underway. Staff is considering how best to inform and involve the public in this effort to address jobs-housing imbalances. Wright focused on the long-distance work commutes on rural roads as a pressing issue. Chair Campbell recommended that he look into the community effort to apply for "Challenge" grants, noting that Sue Haun is the contact person for that program.

d. MCOG Directors. Reports. None.

10. b. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 3:25 p.m.

Submitted: PHILLIP J. DOW, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

By Janet Orth, Deputy Administrator